No Man Can Instruct Others In Anything ~ We Can, However, Awaken Thought & Arouse Impulses

TEACHERS

IT is a great thing to teach. I am never more complimented than when some one addresses me as "teacher." To give yourself in a way that will inspire others to think, to do, to become—what nobler ambition! To be a good teacher demands a high degree of altruism, for one must be willing to sink self, to die—as it were—that others may live. There is something in it very much akin to motherhood—a brooding quality. Every true mother realizes at times that her children are only loaned to her—sent from God—and the attributes of her body and mind are being used by some Power for a purpose. The thought tends to refine the heart of its dross, obliterate pride and make her feel the sacredness of her office.

All good men everywhere recognize the holiness of motherhood—this miracle by which the race survives.

There is a touch of pathos in the thought that while lovers live to make themselves necessary to each other, the mother is working to make herself unnecessary to her children. And the entire object of teaching is to enable the scholar to do without his teacher ❦ Graduation should take place at the vanishing point of the teacher.

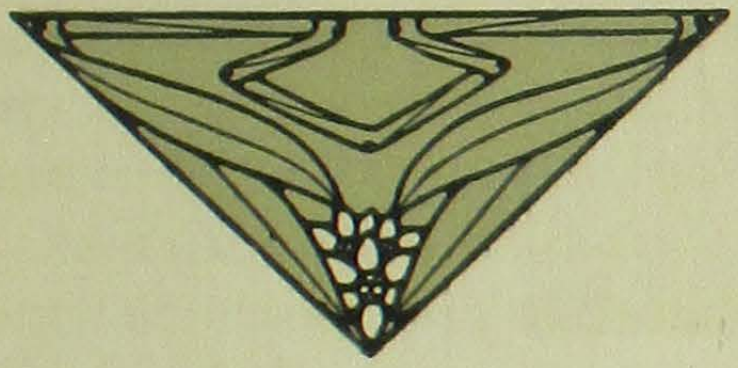
Yes, the efficient teacher has in him much of this mother-quality. Thoreau, you remember, said that genius is essentially feminine; if he had teachers in mind his remark was certainly true ❦ The men of much motive power are not the best teachers—the arbitrary and imperative type, that would bend all minds to match its own, may build bridges, tunnel mountains, discover continents and capture cities, but it cannot teach. In the presence of such a towering personality freedom dies, spontaneity droops, and thought slinks away into

a corner. The brooding quality, the patience that endures, and the yearning of motherhood, are all absent ☙ The man is a commander, not a teacher; and there yet remains a grave doubt whether the warrior and ruler have not used their influence more to make this world a place of the skull, than the abode of happiness and prosperity. The orders to kill all the first-born, and those over ten years of age, were not given by teachers.

The teacher is one who makes two ideas grow where there was only one before. ¶ Just here seems a good place to say that we live in a very stupid, old world, round like an orange and slightly flattened at the polls. The proof of this seemingly pessimistic remark, made by a hopeful and cheerful man, lies in the fact that we place small premium in either honor or money on the business of teaching. As in the olden times, barbers and scullions ranked with musicians, and the Master of the Hounds wore a bigger medal than the Poet-Laureate, so do

we pay our teachers the same as coachmen and coal-heavers, giving them a plentiful lack of everything but overwork.

I will never be quite willing to admit that this country is enlightened, until we cease the inane and parsimonious policy of trying to drive all the really strong men and women out of the teaching profession by putting them on the pay-roll at one-half the rate, or less than that which the same brains and energy can command elsewhere. In the year of our Lord, Nineteen Hundred Six, in a time of peace, we appropriated four hundred million dollars for war and war appliances, and this sum is just double the cost of the entire public school system in America. It is not the necessity of economy that dictates our actions in this matter of education—we simply are not enlightened.

¶ But this thing cannot always last—I look for the time when we shall set apart the best and noblest men and women of earth for teachers, and their compensation will be so adequate that they will be free to give

themselves for the benefit of the race, without apprehension of a yawning almshouse.
A liberal policy will be for our own good,
just as a matter of cold expediency;
it will be enlightened self-interest.